



Lee Daniels

The ‘Lee Daniels’ The Butler’ Interview

Kam Williams
Special To *The Skanner News*

Lee Daniels is best known for directing and producing the Academy Award-winning film *Precious* which was nominated for a half-dozen Oscars in 2010, including histwo for Best Picture and Best Director. Mo’Nique won for Best Supporting Actress while scriptwriter Geoffrey Fletcher landed another for Best Adapted Screenplay.

Lee’s production company, Lee Daniels Entertainment, made its feature film debut in 2001 with *Monster’s Ball*, the dysfunctional family drama for which Halle Berry would earn her historic, Best Actress Oscar.

Last year, he wrote, produced and directed *The Paperboy*, an adaptation of the Pete Dexter novel starring Matthew McConaughey, Zac Efron, John Cusack, and Nicole Kidman.

Here, he talks about his new picture, *The Butler*, a civil rights epic recounting the real-life story of an African-American who served in the White House at the pleasure of eight presidents, from 1952 to 1986.

Kam Williams: Hey Lee, what a phenomenal film!

Lee Daniels: Did you like it?

KW: I loved it!

LD: Thanks, Kam.

KW: I was born in the Fifties so all of the ground you cover in terms of the father-son

relationship and the Civil Rights Movement resonated with me and touched me very deeply.

LD: That makes me feel good. Thank you very much.

KW: So, what inspired you to make the movie?

LD: What attracted me to the project was the father-son story which I looked at as a love story with the Civil Rights Movement as a backdrop. That was intriguing to me both because I’d had issues with my own dad, and because I have issues with my teenage son. I think the father-son love story is a universal one which transcends

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New Movies Opening Aug. 9

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Elysium (R for pervasive profanity and graphic violence) Sci-fi thriller, set in 2154, in a world where the wealthy live on an exclusive space station while the rest of humanity is stuck on a polluted, overpopulated planet that’s looks like a Third World slum. Plot revolves around an ailing factory worker’s (Matt Damon) attempt to reach the heavily-fortified, orbiting

retreat for some urgently-needed cancer treatment. With Jodie Foster, Alice Braga and Sharlto Copley.

Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters (PG for scary images, mild epithets and fantasy violence) Logan Lerman reprises the title role in this sequel based on the Rick Riordan novel of the same name which finds the son of Poseidon and his pals presently embarking on an epic journey in search of the fabled Golden Fleece. Cast includes Alexandra

Daddario, Brandon T. Jackson, Leven Rambin and Stanley Tucci.

Planes (PG for mild action and rude humor) Animated adventure about a rickety, farm crop duster with a fear of heights (Dane Cook) who with the help of a veteran aviator (Stacy Keach) prepares to compete in a famous, high-flying aerial race against the dastardly reigning champ (Roger Craig Smith). Voice cast includes Val Kilmer, Teri Hatcher, Cedric the

Entertainer, Brad Garrett, John Cleese, Sinbad and Larry the Cable Guy.

We’re the Millers (R for pervasive profanity, crude sexuality, drug use and full-frontal male nudity) Raunchy road comedy revolving around a cash-strapped pot dealer (Jason Sudeikis) who enlists the assistance of a stripper (Jennifer Aniston), a latchkey kid (Will Poulter) and a teen runaway (Emma Roberts) to smuggle two tons of marijuana out of Mexico by



Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters

posing as a family on vacation. Ensemble includes Ed Helms, Luis Guzman, Nick Offerman, Thomas Lennon and Kathryn Hahn.

I Give It a Year (R for profanity, sexuality and

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TriMet: Blind Spot on Bus Safety

In 2004, a TriMet bus that was turning left struck and killed a man in a crosswalk. The investigation that followed determined that the design of the bus itself was partly to blame. The 8-inch windshield pillar was so wide that it effectively blocked the operator’s vision during left-hand turns. For small stature operators, the risk was even greater. Further analysis of accident statistics showed that the wide-pillar buses were responsible for over 36% of all crosswalk accidents, even though that model made up just over 10% of the TriMet fleet at the time.

SUBSEQUENTLY, the Union presented TriMet with videos, diagrams and expert witness testimony to demonstrate that this particular model of bus was inherently dangerous to pedestrians. The Union went on to request that TriMet provide special training to drivers, especially small stature drivers, so that more people would not be killed during left-hand turns. Lastly, the Union asked that those buses not be used on routes that had left-hand turns.

TRIMET IGNORED BOTH REQUESTS AND DID NOTHING TO FIX THE PROBLEM.

Fast-forward eight years to 2012, when TriMet signed a contract for 365 new buses. Operators were horrified to learn that the windshield pillar of the new buses is even wider. As shown in the photos on the left, a wide pillar like that on the new bus can “hide” as many as six adults, two children and a baby in a stroller – all at the same time! When the side mirror is added to that width, the blind spot becomes enormous, especially for short stature operators.

While there is no question that TriMet needs new buses, it is unbelievable that the agency would compromise public safety with such a significant purchase. What’s even more unbelievable is that each of these 365 buses is getting an \$11,000 “nose job”.

That’s right. TriMet has decided to add a custom-fabricated “snoot” to each bus in order to match the look of the new Max trains. The expense alone seems questionable, but there’s more. The snoot further compromises safety by creating yet another visual obstruction near the windshield pillar.

At a time when TriMet is blaming workers’ benefits for its financial problems, the agency is spending over \$4 million on cosmetic surgery for 365 new buses. It appears that TriMet not only has a blind spot on bus safety, but also has a blind-eye for prudent spending.

Sincerely, Your Transit Workers

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